

Town of



# AMHERST *Massachusetts*

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## STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF ARTICLES 24 – 25: VILLAGE CENTER REZONING

John P. Musante, Town Manager

May 8, 2012

- ***Promotes Sustainability***

This rezoning is part of the community's effort to implement its Master Plan, increasing local sustainability in terms of reducing sprawl, locating new development near existing transportation/utilities/employment/goods and services, decreasing energy use, increasing economic vitality, providing access to active farmland, and generally reducing environmental impacts.

- ***A Thorough Process = Balanced Result***

This village center rezoning process has taken a full year, with extensive community input and public participation and regular check-ins. The proposal is a balanced representation of all of the community's often competing interests.

- ***Responsive to Community Input → Changes Since Last Fall***

As a result of Town Meeting's response to the proposed rezoning last fall, and continued review and revision by the Planning Board, the proposed rezoning is substantially different:

- **Two Articles** – Dividing the rezoning into two articles (#24 & 25) will allow Town Meeting to vote on changes in each village center separately.
- **Area of Rezoning Reduced** – The areas proposed to be rezoned to a new mixed use village center district or a form-based overlay district have been significantly reduced.
- **Regulations Adjusted** – The regulations for potentially impactful uses—particularly multi-unit residential uses—have been made more stringent. Improvements to design and dimensional regulations have been made in terms of public transit priority, building height, handicapped accessibility, street trees, and other issues.

- ***Balances Community Land Use Approach***

Amherst has responsibly protected its critical open lands for more than 50 years. But continuing to resist directing new growth and development into existing built centers will actually, I believe, encourage sprawl. I believe this rezoning is a long overdue as a step toward balancing Amherst's approach to determining its future.